



Testimony of Michael De Grow

On behalf of the American Diabetes Association

Before the Michigan House Judiciary Committee

November 7, 2007

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Mike DeGrow and I am here today representing the American Diabetes Association and on behalf of all people affected by diabetes in Michigan.

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health; nearly 600,000 or 7.87% of Michigan's adult population, (18 years of age and older) live with diagnosed diabetes. Estimates are that another nearly 300,000 have diabetes but have not yet been diagnosed. Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control recently reported that one in every 523 children has diabetes. In 2004 diabetes was the 6th leading cause of death among Michigan residents.

Diabetes is a serious chronic disease in which the body's ability to properly make or utilize insulin to convert food into energy is impaired. While this simplified definition sounds innocuous, diabetes is a life threatening illness. Diabetes is a leading cause of heart disease and stroke, kidney failure, blindness, amputation, debilitating nerve damage and of death.

Michigan has some of the most restrictive laws in the country when it comes to stem cell research. Michigan state laws on stem cell research are considered even more restrictive than federal law by the scientific community. Sadly, these laws leave Michigan lagging behind other states. For example; California, New Jersey, Wisconsin and Illinois are shining examples of states that are promoting potentially life saving cures for devastating diseases, and the creation of high paying jobs in the bio technology and life sciences fields. Jobs that Michigan can hardly choose to ignore.

HB 4616, HB 4617 and HB 4618 are important pieces of legislation sponsored by Representative Andy Meisner and Representative Mark Meadows that would lessen state restrictions on stem

cell research by removing restrictions on embryonic stem cell research, allowing for the creation of stem cells through nuclear transfer and strengthening the ban on human reproductive cloning. These changes would bring Michigan state law into line with federal law and with the laws of many other states.

These bills would:

- Protect the rights of Michigan patients to have any stem cell treatments for their diseases and injuries that are allowed under federal law and available to other Americans;
- Provide safeguards to ensure clear ethical boundaries and oversight requirements for stem cell research conducted in Michigan
- Impose a strict ban on any attempt at human cloning;
- Require the written consent from donors before leftover embryos from fertility clinics could be donate to research and prohibits embryo donors from receiving financial or other compensation. These embryos are currently discarded as medical waste;
- Remove restriction on Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT) which is the transplanting of a patient's own DNA into an *unfertilized* egg in order to grow stem cells that offer life saving potential without the risk of rejection;
- Boost Michigan's economy by attracting and retaining jobs in biotechnology and life sciences.

Michigan can ill afford to continue lagging behind its neighboring states in supporting stem cell research and denying its citizens the promise of cures for devastating illnesses that stem cell research holds for so many. On behalf of the American Diabetes Association and all Michigan citizens striving to live well despite having diabetes, I ask you to give your immediate attention and support to House Bills 4616, 4617 and 4618.

Thank you.